



COMMITTEE ON  
**EDUCATION  
& LABOR**  
REPUBLICANS

---

## COMMITTEE STATEMENT

---

---

**Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education: "Serving All Students:  
Promoting a Healthier, More Supportive School Environment"**

**February 16, 2022**

**(As prepared for delivery)**

*"Committee Republicans believe ensuring student safety in the classroom is of the utmost importance. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, each state is required to develop a plan for supporting school districts' efforts to reduce policies that compromise the health and safety of students.*

*"In fact, 44 states already have laws governing the appropriate use of seclusion and restraint in the classroom, and a majority of states have banned corporal punishment in schools.*

*"Local school officials and staff must provide a safe learning environment and culture where all students can thrive. All students must be provided with learning opportunities and students with disabilities must be accommodated.*

*"The way to achieve safer and healthier learning environments in schools is not through more federal control and intervention. School districts do not need more prescriptive, one-size-fits-all mandates from Washington bureaucrats. States and local communities are the most appropriate places to determine the best way to keep students and educators safe.*

*"Ultimately, school boards and school officials must work on engaging parents in these important discussions regarding their children's welfare. Parents know what works best for their children.*

*"As a committee dedicated to ensuring that students get the best education possible, we should be more focused on empowering parents. Parents are the biggest and best stakeholders in their children's education and safety.*

*"Over the past several months, parents have made it very clear that their child's education is their top priority.*

*"All across the country, parents have expressed concern over the troubling learning loss and mental health issues caused by keeping classroom doors closed to appease teachers unions.*

*"Even though we knew that keeping children out of school led to higher rates of depression, suicide attempts, and other serious complications, teachers unions continued to fight to keep schools closed. It is very clear why parents are irate.*

*"Increasingly parents have expressed support for education freedom, yet many Democrats have remained adamantly opposed to school choice. Keeping families from picking the education environment*

*that is right for them shows that Democrats do not put students first nor are they willing to put the education of children over politics.*

*"It is time for Democrats to admit that we are in a booming, new era of parental engagement and education freedom. It is an era based on choice, instead of force.*

*"We all share a desire to ensure that children have a safe and healthy learning environment, but we disagree on how best to accomplish this goal. These last two years have shown that Democrats believe in one-size-fits-all mandates from Washington D.C. Republicans, on the other hand, believe in local decision making informed by honest and robust engagement with parents. We also believe in expanding educational freedom to give parents options for finding the best and safest educational environment for their children. As a national leader, the legislature from my home state of Utah is working to increase educational options for parents and students. We must make the concerns of parents a top priority."*